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Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/315, which requested the Secretary-General to report on persistent and emerging challenges to the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, as well as on the approach and support of the United Nations system.

The present report marks the twentieth anniversary of the annual report of the Secretary-General on causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. Thus, it re-examines key structural factors that have increased the probability of conflict and insecurity on the continent in the past two decades, and for which further action is required to achieve the shared goals and aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. Follow-up actions and initiatives of the United Nations system to implement the recommendations contained in my report of 2017 (A/72/269-S/2017/780) are also highlighted.

Consistent with my vision on preventing conflict and sustaining peace, and in keeping with the mandate of resolution 71/315 to develop policy proposals on issues identified in the 1998 report of the Secretary-General (A/52/871-S/1998/318), the present report advocates for the strengthening of capacities for structural conflict prevention in Africa. Notable progress has been made, especially with regard to the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture. However, more concerted action by African regional and subregional organizations and by Africa's international partners is needed to further strengthen African-led efforts to prevent conflicts and address their root causes, including through more integrated and inclusive people-centred approaches.

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I. Introduction

1. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 71/315, the present report covers persistent and emerging challenges to the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, as well as the approach and support of the United Nations system in tackling those challenges. As 2018 marks the twentieth year since the report's first publication in 1998 (see A/52/871-S/1998/318), the present report highlights progress made over the past two decades and assesses remaining challenges by focusing on the root causes of conflict.

2. In section II, the report highlights progress made and assesses persisting and emerging root causes of conflicts as well as the conditions required to build durable peace and people-centred development. Section III examines key actions and initiatives undertaken by the United Nations system during the period under review, from July 2017 to June 2018, to support Africa's efforts to prevent conflict, address its root causes and sustain peace. The support provided by the United Nations system on economic and social issues, specifically, is covered in my complementary report on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (A/73/269). Consistent with my vision on preventing conflict and the African Union's renewed focus on structural conflict prevention, section IV advocates for the strengthening of capacities for conflict prevention in Africa at all levels. Section V outlines key recommendations for reinforcing the United Nations partnership with and support to Africa in preventing conflicts and addressing their root causes.

II. Two decades in review

3. The present section provides an overview of Africa's progress during the past two decades, assesses some remaining structural causes of conflict and highlights some remedial measures taken by African regional and subregional organizations to address the root causes of conflicts.

A. Overview of Africa's progress in the past two decades

4. In 1997, the Security Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/1997/46) requesting the Secretary-General to submit a report on the sources of conflict in Africa that contained recommendations on ways to prevent and address those conflicts and lay the foundation for durable peace and economic growth. The subsequent report (A/52/871-S/1998/318) identified the sources of conflict in Africa as diverse and complex, comprising historical legacies of colonial and post-cold war ideologies, internal power contestations linked to a "winner-takes-all" syndrome, often violent politicizations of ethnicity, social exclusion and inequality and quests for the control and economic benefits of natural resources.

5. To tackle those challenges, the 1998 report stressed the vital roles early warning, early and effective action and well-prepared and well-coordinated peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts that are driven by Africa and backed by adequate international support and flexibility play in preventing and responding to conflicts. It also emphasized that good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, anti-corruption measures, social development, inclusive economic growth and political will were needed to create conditions for peace and sustainable development on the continent.

6. In 2010, a comprehensive review report (A/65/152-S/2010/526) on the recommendations contained in the 1998 report appraised new and emerging challenges, persistent obstacles and innovative solutions, gains and accomplishments

in the attainment of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. The report highlighted Africa's increased capacity to provide solutions to its problems and engage as an effective partner. In that respect, the United Nations was called upon to reassess its relationship with Africa on the basis of complementarity, comparative advantage and collective responsibility, as well as to establish appropriate partnerships to support the enhanced capacity of African Governments and institutions as leading actors in peace and development on the continent.

7. The past two decades have indeed witnessed remarkable progress and the emergence of a new African narrative in all areas covered in previous reports. Africa is driving its own agenda and rising to meet its peace and development challenges. Considerable progress has been made in developing normative standards and legal and policy instruments, as well as in building capacities and institutions for tackling pressing collective security challenges and advancing shared political, economic, social and regional integration objectives. With the establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture, Africa's institutional capacities for conflict prevention, management and resolution have been developed, and substantial efforts have been made to deepen a culture of democracy, reject unconstitutional changes of government and ensure peaceful political transitions through periodic elections. Significant advancements have been made with regard to regional cooperation and integration, with Africa adopting common positions on global issues of importance to the continent. Ongoing institutional reforms by the African Union aim to consolidate those gains in order to enhance the organization's effectiveness in delivering on its peace, development and integration agenda, addressing the perennial issue of financing for its programmes and peace operations and promoting the rigorous, transparent and accountable management of its resources.

8. Africa has also experienced a period of sustained economic growth and social progress in the past two decades. As noted in my report on the New Partnership for Africa's Development, African countries were among the 10 fastest growing economies in the world, recording an annual growth rate of about 5 per cent. Trade between Africa and the rest of the world has increased by 200 per cent since 2000, and intra-Africa trade is also predicted to increase following the signing, in March 2018, of the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area. The impressive economic growth of the past decade is the result of improved economic governance, including macroeconomic reforms, and a growing climate of political stability. To sustain that, Africa will need to increase efforts at diversifying its economies and advancing industrialization that are backed by innovation, science and technology. The creation of decent jobs and the provision of equal access to opportunities, especially for its growing youth population, remains an urgent priority in Africa, as is the need to address other causes of exclusion.

9. On the social front, Africa has made encouraging progress in establishing social safety nets, promoting girls' education, gender equality, combating infant and maternal mortality and tackling diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and Ebola. Nevertheless, more is required to improve living standards for all Africans, including in areas related to health, tertiary education, child protection, empowering women, combating gender-based violence, sanitation and reducing poverty.

10. In the past two decades, Africa has also increased its cooperation with bilateral partners and demonstrated a continued commitment to multilateralism and to an effective multilateral system for promoting international peace and security and collective action to tackle other economic, social and environmental threats, such as climate change. For instance, there has been momentum to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: 28 African countries have already presented or are planning to present their voluntary national reviews by 2019. In addition, a

stronger and more progressive institutional partnership has been forged between the African Union and the United Nations, as evidenced in the signing of the Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security in April 2017, and the Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in January 2018.

11. To consolidate those achievements and address persisting and new challenges, African Governments, with the support of their international partners, will need to ensure the genuine and meaningful implementation of all the progressive policies they have in place for peace and security, human rights, good governance, anti-corruption and sustainable development. Effective implementation will require real and sufficient political will by Africa's leaders and regional and subregional organizations, backed by adequate resources, to transform existing policies into reality for the African people. It will also require political will and the sustained commitment of the international community to support Africa-owned, Africa-driven and African-led solutions. The United Nations Security Council and Peace and Security Council of the African Union also continue to hold regular joint consultative meetings, and have undertaken to conduct joint missions to conflict areas in Africa to facilitate the formulation of common positions and recommendations for joint or coordinated action.

B. Conflicts in Africa: persisting and emerging root causes

12. Despite the progress highlighted above, challenges remain. In the past two decades, just as the international community has witnessed a number of African countries that were embroiled in armed conflict in 1998 successfully emerge from those conflicts, it has also seen others relapse or break out into violent conflicts, with significant changes in the frequency and intensity of those conflicts.

13. Recent conflicts in Africa have tended to be more intra-State, rather than between States, and they often have a regional and cross-border dimension and new and multiple actors or agents who have varied goals, tactics and targets. Local militias, factionalized armed groups and extremist and terrorist groups have emerged as new actors and agents, alongside national armies and protesting civilians. Goals have expanded beyond the quest for political power and State control to include identity issues over ethnicity and religion, terrorism, increased access to resources such as land and water and a need for basic human rights, security and development. Civilians and civilian sites such as settlements, schools and medical facilities are often targeted, and unconventional tactics including suicide bombings, abductions and sexual violence are now employed. Current trends in conflict are characterized by grave civilian fatalities, forced displacement, the recruitment and use of children, setbacks to peace and political processes and a weakening of the social fabric and economic losses. Those trends reflect structural weaknesses, necessitating an increased focus on addressing the root causes of conflict while also tackling proximate causes and triggers, including through inclusive, sustainable development.

14. Previous reports, including the 1998 report, have addressed a variety of root causes of conflict in Africa, many of which remain unaddressed. They include social exclusion; poverty; injustice; corruption; the mismanagement of natural resources; maritime insecurity; the presence of small arms; organized crime; weak institutions; human rights violations, including children's and women's rights; poor diversity management; unemployment; and governance deficits relating to democracy, a lack of inclusive participation of women and youth in political and peace processes, election-related violence and "winner-takes-all" syndrome. The following section addresses three other root causes of conflict.

Political exclusion and lack of readiness for genuine and inclusive dialogue

15. Notwithstanding progress made on democracy and good governance, continued political exclusion, like other forms of social exclusion, remains a causal source of violent conflict in Africa. The marginalization of individuals and groups from participation in political processes reflects deficits in governance that may stem from discriminatory laws and customary practices, "winner-takes-all" politics, non-adherence to the rule of law, the violation of human rights and political intimidation. Women, youth, ethnic and religious minorities and political opposition groups are often the most affected and vulnerable.

16. Political exclusion is exacerbated by the restriction of political space, the intimidation of political opponents and the lack of mechanisms for constructive dialogue and engagement. In instances where those mechanisms exist, disadvantaged and opposition groups may be unwilling to engage owing to fear or a lack of trust and confidence in a government-led process. Consequently, marginalized, opposition and disadvantaged groups have largely tended to resort to other means, including violence, bids for secession and mass protests to express their grievances, clamour for their rights and seek redress for inequalities and discrimination, thus creating fertile ground for mobilization for violent conflict.

17. Since 2011, the international community has witnessed ways in which economic, social and political exclusion in Africa have led to mass mobilization and organized protests against harsh living conditions, poor service delivery, inequality, unemployment, corruption, repression, impunity and injustice. In a few cases, that has resulted in the ousting or resignation of political leaders, evoking a new pattern of political transitions. With a growing youthful population that could easily be mobilized for violence with the use of new technology, notably social media, political and economic exclusion remain a serious threat to stability, peace, security and development on the continent.

18. Inclusive politics, with confidence-building measures where appropriate, is therefore essential for promoting dialogue and participation in political processes, as well as for creating a just, peaceful, prosperous and integrated society. Governments are encouraged to create and ensure enabling conditions and opportunities that promote inclusivity and the participation of marginalized or disadvantaged groups, including by instituting affirmative measures, ensuring human rights and adopting inclusive governance approaches. In that respect, it is imperative that Governments promote genuine and inclusive dialogue with the opposition, as well as with civil society organizations, as a means of reaffirming the social contract. Strategies that contribute to conflict prevention, such as decentralization and power-sharing arrangements, should be utilized as appropriate, as should platforms for reconciliation and transitional justice in post-conflict contexts.

Environmental stresses

19. The pathways linking climate change to security are complex and multilayered, but it is increasingly clear that environmental factors serve as potential risk factors or threat multipliers for conflict. Drought, desertification, land degradation and flooding put strains on livelihoods and are potential triggers for large-scale displacement, which can result in tension, xenophobia and violent conflicts between displaced populations and host communities owing to increased pressure on already scarce resources. In addition, other human-induced environmental issues, such as the illicit exploitation of natural resources, which is prevalent in Africa, disrupt natural ecosystems and wildlife, undermine economic growth and sustainable development and increasingly intersect with corruption and transnational organized crime. Marginalized groups living in rural areas, especially women and children, are the

most affected by environmental degradation owing to their reliance on natural resources for their livelihoods and habitations, and they have little or no alternative means of making a living.

20. Many parts of Africa are equally vulnerable to the profound negative effects of climate change, which take a huge toll on communities and can create fertile ground for conflict and the rise of violent extremism. The interplay between climate change, migration and violent conflicts is perhaps most evident in the Sahel, where the shrinking of Lake Chad has affected the livelihoods of millions of people, deepened poverty, triggered forced displacement and heightened vulnerability to terrorism and violent extremism. Similarly, the Horn of Africa has historically been affected by the effects of climate change and competition over depleted natural resources. The consequences of climate change, such as more frequent and intense droughts, warmer temperatures and the geographical redistribution of pests and diseases, are likely to continue to negatively affect food production and agriculture. If those multiple risks are not addressed through prevention and risk reduction efforts that are rooted in inclusive policies and participatory processes, they could lead to instability and conflict.

21. In addition, countries in the Sahel region as well as in West and Central Africa, notably the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, the Niger and Nigeria, are experiencing the challenges associated with shifting patterns of pastoralist mobility, which is creating severe tension and violent conflicts between herders and farmers. In Nigeria, that has resulted in escalating violence during the reporting period, leading to high fatalities, the destruction of villages and the loss of livelihoods. The situation is closely linked to demographic and ecological pressures, which have reduced the availability of grazing lands, often because of the expansion of farmland, urban development and climate change. The situation is also growing more complex, as it is increasingly linked to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, leading to a need to integrate issues related to climate change into both early warning systems and initiatives for small arms control.

22. Innovative solutions and the development and transfer of clean and environmentally sound technologies are necessary to enhance preparedness and resilience against the effects of climate change. It is therefore imperative to support African countries in applying innovative and technological solutions in critical areas, such as climate-smart agriculture, to enhance agricultural productivity and food security, promote adaption and entrepreneurship, build resilience and achieve sustained peace and sustainable development.

Trends in human insecurity, poor human capacity development and conflicts

23. Human insecurity and poor human capacity development are aspects of social injustice and exclusion that are closely linked to direct and structural violence and are illustrative of unequal power relations and inequitable access to opportunities. At its core, human security is about the rights, security and development of people; therefore, human insecurity is both a root cause and an outcome of conflict.

24. As a root cause, human insecurity, including widespread human rights abuses, systemic poverty, illiteracy and unemployment, increases a population's vulnerability to being exploited for violence, radicalization and terrorism and forced migration. As an outcome, human insecurity is exacerbated during violent conflicts and instability owing to higher levels of human rights violations and violations of humanitarian law, which stem from atrocities, malnutrition and food shortages, forced displacement, human trafficking, the recruitment and use of children by armed groups and forces, and increased sexual violence and systematic rape. That link reaffirms a need to

integrate human rights and humanitarian and development concerns into political and peace processes.

25. In addition, globalization has had both a positive and negative impact on human security trends in Africa. The structural adjustment programmes introduced in the 1980s continue to place a high debt burden on many African countries. Proportions of national budgets for debt servicing have increased, while allocations to health, education and the development of critical infrastructure crucial to alleviating poverty, creating jobs, fulfilling human rights and promoting human security have decreased. The global war on terrorism has also had a considerable impact on human security and humanitarian access, and has increased military spending at the expense of social and economic expenditures. However, efforts are being undertaken to complement military responses to conflicts in Africa with more integrated strategies that encompass development, human rights, humanitarian aid, peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

26. On a more positive note, multinational corporations operating in Africa are increasingly required to implement local content policies, which facilitate human capacity development by promoting the participation and capacity development of nationals in the workforce and increasing the use of local suppliers, goods and services. Local content policies also promote the transfer of knowledge and skills to the local economy, companies and people. As such, they contribute to maximizing the economic and social benefits from the extractive sector, creating decent jobs and stimulating broad-based economic growth. A number of African countries are implementing local content policies as a way of promoting inclusion and preventing environmental degradation, which are two issues that have incited conflict between communities and multinational corporations in the past. It is critical to ensure that local content polices in Africa are aligned with the actions and recommendations contained in the Business and Sustainable Development Commission's flagship report, entitled "Better business, better world", in order to effectively prevent conflicts. Such alignment is simple and highly cost-effective: by creating decent jobs, prioritizing women and youth employment, protecting human rights, investing in local communities and paying their fair share of taxes, businesses will contribute to tackling the root causes of conflict.

27. Another issue directly related to human security and development is the question of an enabling environment for civil society engagement and participation. A strong civil society promotes civic values, increases prospects for transparency and accountability, improves legitimacy and contributes to the prevention of conflicts. In many African countries, civil society participation and engagement is still largely weak or highly politicized. It is critical that public policy making processes be inclusive, and Governments should systematically consult and involve members of civil society, especially women and youth, in those processes in order to adequately reflect their needs and priorities. Similarly, during peace processes, efforts must be made to systematically consult and engage with members of civil society to ensure the inclusion of their perspectives and priorities in peace agreements.

28. Strong, just and accountable institutions are important for safeguarding people from pervasive threats and are required for promoting human security and development in a systematic, comprehensive and preventative way. Therefore, there is a need to invest in strong, non-corrupt, accountable and inclusive institutions, including parliaments, election management bodies and security and justice structures, that are essential for protecting the rights of the African people and contribute to strengthening the conflict-resilience capacities of individuals and communities. Support for and partnerships with civil society organizations, the private sector and regional and subregional organizations are also crucial, given the contributions they make to safeguarding people, communities and livelihoods.

C. Recent efforts to address the root causes of conflicts and promote peace and sustainable development in Africa

29. African countries, the African Union and the regional economic communities and regional mechanisms have undertaken a range of initiatives which aim at addressing root causes of conflict and creating conditions for durable peace and sustainable development. Progress has been made in the implementation of Agenda 2063, in particular its first 10-year implementation plan (2014–2023), with the launch of three flagship projects, namely Silencing the Guns by 2020, the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the establishment of the single African air transport market.

30. The African Continental Free Trade Area is expected to create a single market for goods and services that encompasses 1.2 billion people and was adopted alongside the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment. When the Protocol enters into force, it is expected to be implemented in a phased manner, promoting visa-free movement and integration. When it welcomed the African Continental Free Trade Area as a tool for preventing inter-State border conflicts and realizing Agenda 2063, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union highlighted its utility for addressing the challenge of irregular migration and enhancing the implementation of the African Union Border Programme.

31. Implementation of the 2016 African Union Master Road Map of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020 is also under way. The Road Map underscores the need to pursue peace, security and inclusive socioeconomic development simultaneously. As the implementation deadline is fast approaching, it is urgent to accelerate action on that agenda. In that respect, I commend the two African countries that are the first to submit written reports on their efforts in that regard and encourage other African countries to do same. The United Nations stands ready to assist as necessary upon request.

32. Related to that initiative is the renewed focus the African Union and its regional economic communities and mechanisms have placed on structural conflict prevention. In 2015, the African Union adopted the Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework, which is currently being implemented to assist States in addressing the root causes of conflict in a holistic manner. The Framework prioritizes solutions that are people-centred and people-driven and addresses the root causes of conflict relating to socioeconomic development, governance, human rights, humanitarian issues, the rule of law, gender and youth, the environment and climate change.

33. Consistent with its designation of 2018 as the African Anti-Corruption Year, the African Union is intensifying efforts to combat the chronic problem of corruption, which drains the continent of more than $50 billion per year. I welcome the efforts being made to invest in anti-corruption education and sensitization campaigns, especially for young people, and to develop an African common position on asset recovery as a flagship initiative of the anti-corruption year. The United Nations remains committed to supporting African-led efforts to tackle that scourge, including by strengthening South-South cooperation through voluntary exchanges, mutual legal assistance and the sharing of best practices among national anti-corruption commissions, audit agencies and investigative bodies, as well as by supporting efforts to curb tax evasion and illicit financial flows.

34. Further building on the theme of the African Union for 2017, "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth", African Governments and institutions have reaffirmed their strong commitments to reducing youth

unemployment by at least 2 per cent annually. They have adopted the African Union Road Map on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth, pledging to ensure financial services for young people, invest in entrepreneurship development, invest in education and health and create spaces for youth civic and political participation. Those are positive developments and I strongly encourage all African countries to develop their demographic dividend profiles in alignment with the Road Map. The United Nations stands ready to assist African Member States and regional and subregional organizations with that process.

35. Efforts are being made to promote the participation and leadership of African women, at all levels, in preventing conflicts and addressing their root causes. In May 2018, a new African Union gender equality and women's empowerment strategy was adopted to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the African Union and improve the coordination of gender mainstreaming actions at subregional and national levels. The Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa), endorsed by both the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the United Nations Security Council, has been working to strengthen women's leadership and participation in mediation processes. In July 2018, under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, three joint solidarity missions by the African Union, the United Nations and Sweden were undertaken under the auspices of the African Women Leaders Network to Chad, the Niger and South Sudan. The missions highlighted gender and sexual-based violence, as well as the voices and roles of women in peace, security and development, including with regard to preventing violent extremism and strengthening climate security.

36. The African Union is also taking initial steps, in the context of its Common African Position on Humanitarian Effectiveness, to establish and operationalize an African Union humanitarian agency. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union has emphasized the fact that the agency would steer appropriate and effective humanitarian action on the continent and strengthen continental, regional and national capabilities for prevention, early warning, early response and early post-conflict reconstruction to avoid relapse into protracted conflict situations.

37. At the subregional level, the regional economic communities and mechanisms have adopted essential policies and tools for addressing the root causes of conflict. Their mid- to long-term development plans align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063, which requires the coherent implementation of those agendas from the global to the community level. The United Nations will continue to enhance its collaboration with the African Union and regional economic communities and mechanisms to assist in ensuring synergies and coherence in implementation, including in the context of the Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

III. United Nations system support and approach

38. The following section highlights activities undertaken by the United Nations system during the review period, focusing mostly on initiatives and actions that contributed to addressing the root causes of conflict.

A. Peace and security

39. The Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat and the Special Envoys and Representatives of the Secretary-General in Africa continued to deploy their

combined resources to support the peaceful resolution of political crises and conflicts and efforts to address their root causes. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia continued to support the efforts of the Government of Somalia to promote reconciliation as a means of addressing root causes of the Somali conflict, including through frequent briefings to the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region continued to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, together with the African Union and the other guarantors of the Framework, namely the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Efforts were made to combat the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources as well as to enable women, youth and civil society to participate in promoting the objectives of the Framework.

40. Following the launch of a United Nations action plan for Libya in September 2017, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya has been facilitating an inclusive political process aimed at finding consensus on the way forward, encouraging local reconciliation efforts and engaging with armed groups to develop a long-term United Nations strategy to tackle challenges. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa engaged with relevant stakeholders in the region to defuse tensions and advocate for inclusive and genuine political dialogue and the creation of conditions conducive to the holding of peaceful and inclusive elections. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa also engaged in efforts to promote the peaceful resolution of political crises and create a climate for peaceful elections. Together, the two Special Representatives, in collaboration with the United Nations country teams in the affected countries, supported diplomatic, security and humanitarian responses to violence perpetrated by Boko Haram and advocated for the establishment of a joint regional strategy to address the root causes of the crisis. Related to that, the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the African Union Commission signed a memorandum of understanding with regard to collaboration and capacity-building on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. In May 2018, the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa began a project to strengthen the capacities of States in Central Africa to effectively implement the Kinshasa Convention on the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa.

41. The Peacebuilding Fund provided seed funding for some components of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel and increased the capacity of the United Nations system to deliver as one. Funding was provided for regional, cross-border and national programmes that addressed the structural causes of instability and crisis in the Sahel region across the humanitarian-development, peace and security nexus. In addition, funding targeted catalytic initiatives that kickstarted new longer-term peacebuilding efforts or accelerated existing ones and ensured ownership to increase the likelihood of more sustained peacebuilding change, and those that invested 30 per cent of funding in gender equality. Specific funding was provided to promote reconciliation and security sector reform in Burkina Faso, strengthen national and local infrastructure for peace in Chad, create a youth employment and peacebuilding programme in Mali, promote social cohesion and conflict prevention in Mauritania and set up a human rights and international humanitarian rights law compliance framework for the operations of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel.

42. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth commenced implementation of a project on youth contributions to sustainable peace in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, focusing on three African countries in 2018.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN-Women) provided support to the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and SADC in developing regional action plans on women, peace and security.

43. The Office of the Special Adviser on Africa continued to provide effective advocacy platforms for African organizations to engage with the United Nations and the wider international community on a range of peace, security, good governance and socioeconomic development issues. Likewise, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation established a dedicated team to facilitate South-South and triangular cooperation on peace and development in Africa.

B. Good governance and social justice

44. During the review period, considerable efforts were made to promote the engagement of civil society organizations in democratic processes and governance. The United Nations Democracy Fund continued to empower civil society organizations in Africa and mobilized communities to activate citizen watch systems to combat the trafficking of girls in Benin. UNDP engaged civil society in strengthening dialogue for transitional justice and victims' voices in South Sudan and supported social healing initiatives through community dialogues in Rwanda.

45. UNDP support included strengthening the capacity of public institutions for the delivery of quality basic services, including improved health-care systems. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Global Land Tool Network worked with Governments, non-governmental stakeholders and other United Nations entities to address land issues in Africa. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime provided capacity-building assistance to Member States in the Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions to strengthen the credibility and accountability of their criminal justice systems, thereby increasing people's confidence that the system would address some of the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism.

C. Human rights protection and humanitarian action

46. With regard to human rights, the first high-level dialogue on human rights between the African Union and the United Nations was held in Addis Ababa on 24 April 2018. The two organizations agreed to enhance collaboration in human rights and peace and security, including with regard to the women, peace and security agenda, and the compliance and accountability frameworks for African Union peace support operations. The Office on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect cooperated with Member States, the African Union and regional economic communities and mechanisms to integrate the risk factors for atrocity crimes into early warning and early response mechanisms.

47. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continued its work to prevent human rights violations, improve the protection of civilians and implement the Human Rights Up Front initiative. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, OHCHR worked closely with Parliament, the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the National Human Rights Commission and non-governmental organizations to strengthen their capacities with regard to human rights. In Mali, the advocacy of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict resulted in the inclusion of child protection standards in the compliance framework for human rights developed by the United Nations and the Joint Force of the G-5 Sahel.

48. To strengthen the humanitarian-development nexus and its linkage to peace, the humanitarian country team in Chad, led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, developed a multi-year humanitarian response plan aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the national development plan of Chad. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees provided protection and assistance to refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons and supported African institutions with policy assistance and capacity-building, including in the ongoing process to establish an African Union humanitarian agency.

49. The United Nations Population Fund strengthened its humanitarian preparedness and response, including with regard to sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services, and is also building national capacity for the provision of gender-sensitive integrated sexual reproductive health in South Sudan. The United Nations Children's Fund supported the capacity development of justice and law enforcement officials and social welfare officers to better handle cases of child violence in Nigeria.

D. Inclusive economic growth and sustainable development

50. Several United Nations entities continued to support regional and national efforts to address structural challenges and create the necessary conditions for inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. In December 2017, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Economic Commission for Africa prepared the *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2018* report, which revealed that recent economic growth in Africa has been accompanied by a only modest decline in inequality and that overall growth patterns are not sufficiently inclusive. The report urged African countries to formulate policies to diversify their economies, reduce reliance on commodities, develop information and communications technology infrastructure and promote good governance. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia concluded its implementation of a development account project that established national technology transfer offices in Egypt, Mauritania, Morocco, the Sudan and Tunisia, and facilitated partnerships among research communities, the private sector and Governments.

51. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) partnered to coordinate livestock activities in the Kenyan and Ugandan cross-border areas, facilitating livestock movement that allowed Turkana pastoralists to escape the 2017 drought and move peacefully into Uganda to access grazing. The International Fund for Agricultural Development created sustainable economic opportunities for smallholder farmers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, improving their access to production services, technologies and markets. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization is implementing a project funded by the European Union in the greater Bahr el-Ghazal region of South Sudan to improve food security and incomes.

52. To bolster economic development, the International Telecommunication Union assisted some African countries with developing national broadband and digital economy policies. The United Nations Office at Geneva is amplifying best practices and innovative solutions on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and has initiated a lab on the Goals that connects Governments in Africa with economic and policy experts in Geneva. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction assisted 25 Member States in Africa with developing or updating their disaster loss databases and delivered training on the use of the databases to nearly 1,000 national and local stakeholders. The Office of the High Representative for the

Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States undertook a range of advocacy, research and capacity-building activities to mobilize global support and address key structural impediments to sustainable development in the least developed countries, in accordance with the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020.

53. With a view to ensuring a more integrated, cross-pillar approach with regard to the humanitarian-development and peace and security nexus in the Sahel, on 21 March 2018, I appointed Ibrahim Thiaw of Mauritania as the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General for the Sahel. On 30 June, in the margins of the thirty-first Ordinary Session of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, the United Nations announced the recalibration of its integrated strategy for the Sahel through the development of a United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel, under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General. The overarching goal of the Support Plan is to scale up efforts to accelerate shared prosperity and lasting peace in the Sahel countries and the region by implementing priorities to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. The Support Plan will better channel interventions, investments and resources to meet the needs, priorities and plans of the Sahelian countries, and thus contribute to changing the narratives on the Sahel, which is blessed with abundant human, cultural and natural resources, offering tremendous potential for rapid growth.

IV. Case for strengthening capacities for conflict prevention in Africa

54. While recognizing that the primary responsibility for conflict prevention lies with Member States, the United Nations, the African Union and the regional economic communities and mechanisms have, over the past two decades, made considerable progress in developing their capacities for conflict prevention. Efforts in that regard have consisted of both operational prevention actions to address the immediate risk of violent conflict and structural prevention actions to address the root causes of conflict and build the resilience of States and communities. Collectively, the United Nations, the African Union and the regional economic communities and mechanisms have deployed those capacities to support the efforts of African countries to prevent conflicts, including through the development of early warning systems, the provision of mediation and mediation support and the building of conflict prevention capacities across Governments, civil society and the private sector. Yet, as the Peace and Security Council of the African Union has repeatedly noted, a number of African countries remain trapped in a vicious cycle of conflicts, linked to multiple factors, including governance deficits.

55. The Peace and Security Council has further reiterated that the immediate priority for the African Union is to implement its existing instruments for conflict prevention rather than adopt new ones. African countries, the African Union and the regional economic communities and mechanisms have indeed adopted a plethora of instruments on human and people's rights, governance, elections and democracy, respect for diversity and minority rights, gender equality and women and youth development, border and natural resources management, anti-corruption measures, disarmament, terrorism and the building of strong institutions. Those instruments represent a consolidated framework of norms and principles, and their effective implementation will reduce the risk of violent conflicts, sustain peace and promote sustainable development on the continent.

56. The implementation of those instruments by the African Union and the regional economic communities and mechanisms have, however, been piecemeal, with more focus given to the direct or operational dimensions, as their application has largely evolved in response to specific situations or identified needs on the ground. For instance, key pillars and tools of the African Peace and Security Architecture, such as the Continental Early Warning System; the Panel of the Wise, including FemWise-Africa; the election observer missions of the African Union; and the African Union high-level panels and special envoys have been institutionalized and are all being utilized for the prevention and mediation of conflicts. On the other hand, much remains to be done to operationalize instruments for structural prevention, including the African Peace and Security Architecture Road Map for 2016–2020, Agenda 2063 and the African Union Master Road Map of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020, all of which call for a systematic and strategic focus to address the root, proximate and structural causes of conflict.

57. The adoption by the Peace and Security Council of the Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework as a comprehensive tool for preventive action demonstrates the commitment the African Union is making to bridge existing gaps in the implementation of its instruments for operational and structural prevention. Through the Framework, the African Union Commission is promoting a coordinated Commission-wide approach to conflict prevention. An interdepartmental task force on conflict prevention has been established to strengthen coordination within the Commission as well as among the African Union, the regional economic communities and mechanisms and other partners, on the basis of complementarity, comparative advantage, burden-sharing and collective responsibility.

58. The African Union is also assisting its member States, upon request, with their respective country structural vulnerability assessments: a tool to facilitate the early identification of a country's structural vulnerability to conflict that covers political, economic, social and environmental factors. At the same time, the African Union is supporting States in the development of their country structural vulnerability mitigation strategies, which define relevant implementation modalities for structural prevention and mitigation options. A technical working group on structural conflict prevention in Africa was also established to support that process, comprising the African Union, regional economic communities and mechanisms, the African Peer Review Mechanism, the African Development Bank and UNDP. So far, however, only a few African countries have volunteered to undertake their structural vulnerability assessments. It is imperative that African countries utilize that process and possibly mainstream it into other existing national mechanisms such as their national development plans and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

59. The regional economic communities and mechanisms are also developing their capacities for conflict prevention, covering both operational and structural dimensions. With regard to the former, they have recorded tangible progress on the development of early warning systems and the provision of mediation and mediation support and preventive diplomacy and election observation, though progress is uneven and varies in terms of their respective mandates, capacities and resources. Regarding the latter, the regional economic communities and mechanisms, like the African Union, have a range of instruments that cover socioeconomic development, democracy, elections, good governance, humanitarian relief and regional integration, providing a comprehensive framework for coordinated and concerted actions to address structural causes of conflict. However, the implementation of those instruments does not necessarily include a conflict-sensitive or prevention focus. Nevertheless, there is a growing awareness among the regional economic communities and mechanisms of the need to link development work with conflict prevention. That resonates with a key finding of the 2018 joint United Nations-World

Bank publication entitled *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, which calls for the integration of prevention measures into development policies and efforts, and for development actors to support national and regional conflict prevention agendas.

60. Collaboration and coordination at various levels are highly essential for strengthening conflict prevention capacities on the continent. There is a need to increase partnerships on prevention among the regional economic communities and mechanisms, as well as among the African Union, regional economic communities and mechanisms and the United Nations, and with African civil society organizations and the private sector, on the basis of comparative advantages. As I reaffirmed during the second United Nations-African Union Annual Conference, held in Addis Ababa on 9 July 2018, the United Nations is committed to further deepening the strategic partnership with the African Union and the regional economic communities and mechanisms. In that context, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and I also reiterated our call for the strengthening of a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated approach to conflict prevention that addresses the root causes of conflicts, strengthens political processes and respect for the rule of law and promotes sustainable and inclusive development, including through the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel.

A. What a renewed focus on structural conflict prevention in Africa entails

61. As illustrated above, Africa has a plethora of instruments for conflict prevention, which provide a comprehensive, integrated and inclusive framework for addressing immediate triggers and structural causes of conflict in a more systematic and strategic manner. What is needed is genuine political will and capacity, including financial resources, for effective implementation that translates existing conflict prevention instruments into a reality for the African people.

62. To effectively address the structural causes of conflicts, implementation efforts should also aim at building and strengthening conflict prevention capacities, especially at the local level. Support for existing traditional or community conflict prevention mechanisms is critical, as is the need to enhance the capacities of key national bodies such as parliaments, security and justice institutions and election management bodies. For instance, support for national and local infrastructures for peace and insider mediation will help to develop, equip and empower national and local actors with the appropriate skills for mediation, negotiation and dialogue, thereby contributing to building resilient societies and preventing outbreaks of violent conflicts. As seen in countries such as Ghana and Kenya, national infrastructures for peace provide an inclusive platform for structured collaboration among State authorities; civil society, including women, youth and traditional and faith-based leaders, academia and think tanks; and the private sector to prevent and resolve conflicts. Such initiatives, which have proved useful for conflict prevention efforts on the ground, should be replicated and scaled up across Africa and beyond.

63. Related to that is the crucial need for national ownership of conflict prevention to ensure effectiveness and sustainability. As noted above, many of the root causes of conflicts are linked to multiple factors, including governance deficits. Consequently, the ownership and leadership of national Governments, as well as of other stakeholders, including civil society, women and youth, are essential to preventing violent conflicts, addressing their root causes and sustaining peace.

64. Given their roles in facilitating and assisting States with structural prevention, it is imperative that the African Union and the regional economic communities and

mechanisms further strengthen their capacities to mainstream prevention into all their programmes and activities. Such mainstreaming efforts should span the programme development cycle, from conceptualization and design to monitoring, reporting and evaluating and assessing impact. The United Nations is doing the same. In February 2018, I introduced an integrated platform on prevention, which will provide a conceptual and operational framework for translating and integrating my vision on conflict prevention across all pillars of our work on peace and security, human rights and development. The platform will consist of shared but differentiated responsibilities for all United Nations actors at three levels, country, regional and headquarters, to overcome fragmentation and consolidate our capacities to meet prevention challenges.

65. Integral to the strengthening of the capacities of the African Union and the regional economic communities and mechanisms is the need to further improve synergies and coordinated action between the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Governance Architecture, which are two important and interlinked mechanisms for preventing, managing and resolving conflicts. Greater synergies between the two architectures, at both the strategic and the operational level, will help to better address the root causes of conflict on the continent. In the context of their Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, the African Union and the United Nations will work accordingly to support relevant aspects of the African Governance Architecture.

B. Continued United Nations engagement and support for conflict prevention in Africa

66. Over the past two decades, the United Nations has been consistent in providing policy, technical, financial and capacity development support on conflict prevention to African Governments, regional and subregional organizations and civil society groups. It remains committed to assisting African leaders and people in their efforts to find durable Africa-led solutions to silencing the guns, addressing root causes of conflicts, building strong institutions and promoting sustainable and inclusive development.

67. Consistent with the Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework, the United Nations will continue to support the development of national and local infrastructures for peace. Through the Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention of UNDP and the Department of Political Affairs, the Organization will continue to provide analytical capacity to promote conflict-sensitive and -preventive programming in a cross-pillar and holistic manner, as well as to guide its own initiatives in African countries to support national conflict prevention and capacity-building efforts. In addition, in the context of the Partnership Framework for Crisis-Affected Situations, signed in 2017, and the Strategic Partnership Framework for the 2030 Agenda, signed in May 2018, the United Nations and the World Bank will develop joint analyses and tools for exploring new investment approaches for conflict prevention and scale up impact by leveraging financing. Both organizations will also strengthen their collaboration through the implementation of the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel, in the context of the joint African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

68. The United Nations regional political offices will sustain their work, in cooperation with Member States and African regional and subregional organizations, in providing early warning and supporting efforts to address transnational and regional grievances. For example, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the

Sahel and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa will continue to play a prominent facilitating role in support of my good offices mandate in addressing emerging or incipient conflict. Their efforts will remain critical to addressing cross-border or cross-cutting issues related to the Sahel region and the Lake Chad basin.

69. The 16 United Nations special political missions deployed in or working exclusively on situations in Africa will continue to undertake a broad array of preventive functions, ranging from good offices support for national dialogue processes to election monitoring and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. The United Nations will also continue to support the strengthening of the mediation capacity of African regional and subregional organizations, building on the support already being provided to the African Union, ECCAS, the Economic Community of West African States and IGAD.

70. As it continues to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which itself is a global framework for cooperation to prevent violent conflicts and promote sustainable development, the United Nations will encourage the mainstreaming of conflict prevention in the voluntary national reviews of Member States. That is fundamental because, as noted above, a considerable number of African countries plan to present their reviews by 2019. Similar efforts will be encouraged at the regional and subregional level. For instance, in the context of the Sahel region, the recalibration of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel enabled a better repositioning of the 2030 Agenda at the core of the international response in the Sahel. The inclusive process conducted to develop the United Nations Support Plan for the Sahel contributed to ensuring ownership by and leadership of the countries of the region. The Special Adviser for the Sahel will continue working closely with national and regional actors, including the African Union, to ensure greater alignment of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel with national and regional priorities.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

71. Conflict prevention lies at the core of the mandate of the United Nations, cutting across all pillars of its work. It is also an integral component of the work of African regional and subregional organizations, notably the African Union and the regional economic communities and mechanisms, and is vital to the realization of the shared continental vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa. Conflict prevention is therefore not only a moral and legal obligation for the United Nations, the African Union and regional economic communities and mechanisms but also a cornerstone of our collective security and the realization of inclusive and sustainable development.

72. As emphasized in the present report, conflict prevention consists of a range of both operational and structural prevention actions, which are undertaken in the short and long term to address both the proximate and the root causes of conflicts. Member States have the primary responsibility for conflict prevention, and such prevention is ultimately about their capability to build resilience to violent conflicts, strengthen local capacities to build and sustain peace and promote sustainable development. The United Nations, the African Union and regional economic communities and mechanisms play a role in assisting States in those efforts and have developed their respective comprehensive and coherent conflict prevention strategies and tools in that regard. While laudable progress has been made, the gains have also been uneven. In some cases, full implementation of the plethora of conflict prevention instruments is still lagging, and there is an increasing need to enhance collective efforts to prevent conflicts at all stages and address their root causes.

73. Consistent with the Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework, it is therefore imperative for regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the African Peer Review Mechanism, the African Development Bank and the regional economic communities and mechanisms to enhance their work on prevention. They should implement and mainstream the existing conflict prevention instruments they have adopted, including those on governance, democracy, elections, anti-corruption measures, human rights and border management, which are vital for addressing the structural causes of conflict.

74. African countries are encouraged to promote inclusive politics and facilitate and support constructive mechanisms for dialogue with all segments of society. In addition, it is important that they foster inclusive economies by empowering women, youth and other marginalized groups, creating decent jobs for their growing youth populations and promoting gender equality and women's leadership in the economic, financial and corporate sectors.

75. Given the link between the environment and conflict, African countries could, as a matter of urgency, implement measures to reinforce resilience and preparedness for climate change, including by ensuring adaptation strategies, promoting food security, expanding social safety nets and preserving the environment. In addition, it is important that they integrate issues related to climate change into national early warning mechanisms.

76. African civil society groups, including academics and think tanks, can further assist those efforts by undertaking critical research on factors that facilitate peace and resilience on the continent, as they may be different from those that cause conflict and violence.

77. The United Nations, the African Union and the regional economic communities and mechanisms must continue to work towards greater unity of purpose in ensuring a coordinated approach to implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, both of which are useful for addressing the structural factors and root causes of conflict in Africa. Given the proliferation of instruments, each organization is called upon to further enhance coherence, coordination and synergies in their support to African Member States and civil society organizations. Mechanisms such as the United Nations-African Union Annual Conference, the desk-to-desk consultations, the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and the United Nations interdepartmental task force on African affairs provide useful platforms for improving consultation, information exchange and joint planning in our efforts to foster coordinated support for Africa's peace and development priorities.

78. Since assuming office, I have made conflict prevention and our partnership with Africa, through the African Union, two important priorities, with a vision that all actions are taken to assist African countries in averting the outbreak or recurrence of crises and violent conflicts, which have a negative impact on civilian populations and undermine institutions and capacities for peace and development. The Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and the Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have provided a blueprint for operationalizing those priorities. During the second United Nations-African Union Annual Conference, the two organizations reviewed the progress they had made in implementing the Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and endorsed an action plan on the Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations will continue to work towards ensuring coherence in the implementation of those Frameworks and their action plans. There is no doubt that coherent implementation of the two Frameworks will contribute to preventing violent conflicts, addressing their root causes and advancing our shared effort for durable peace and inclusive sustainable development in Africa.